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MIDDLE AMERICA-CARIBBEAN DIVISION

Directorate of Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency

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CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN WEEKLY UPDATE

11 May 1988

This weekly Situation Report is prepared by the Central America and Nicaragua Branches, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. This paper was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, ALA, [redacted]

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CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN
WEEKLY UPDATE
12 May 1988

Perspective: Nicaragua Assuaging Party Concerns

Managua's pursuit of a cease-fire agreement with the rebels is causing concern among Sandinista party loyalists. Embassy and press reports indicate that, after years of promises that the regime would never talk with the insurgents, party rank and file are worried that the revolution will be betrayed. President Ortega has publicly admitted that many party members oppose amnesty for former national guardsmen who served Somoza.

The regime is portraying direct talks with the rebels as a logical response in dealing with a defeated force. Sandinista-controlled media continue to drive home that point, painting rebel military chief Enrique Bermudez as the major obstacle to peace and highlighting the willingness of some rebel field commanders to negotiate directly with the government. The regime also has stressed that social changes wrought by the revolution, including land reform, are irreversible.

The Sandinistas probably will continue to walk a fine line between dealing with growing party concerns and doing what is necessary to induce the rebels to abandon their military struggle. To entice the rebels to disarm and join the national dialogue, the Sandinistas may follow through on earlier hints that they would consider military reforms and local elections this year. They also may hope that an end to the fighting would allow them to divert resources from the military to boost party perks.

Developments This Week

Democratization

-- Nicaraguan labor activists ended a 10-day hunger strike on 5 May after the government agreed to resume negotiations on wage demands and work norms, The Sandinistas also agreed not to harass the hunger strikers, and they released 28 people who had been arrested in connection with the protest. Political parties with ties to independent unions have pledged not to return to the national dialogue until labor demands are met.

-- Nicaragua allowed independent Radio Corporacion to return to the air on 5 May after it had been shut down for 24 hours, according to the official press. Another radio station was allowed to resume broadcasting news after it appealed the suspension of its newscasts.

-- Nicaragua has refused to authorize marches sponsored by the opposition umbrella group, the Democratic Coordination Board Planned marches in Jinotepe on 8 May and in Matagalpa Department on 17 April did not take place because permits were denied. The Interior Ministry also threatened reprisals if indoor meetings--which do not require prior approval--were held instead.

Cease-Fire/Amnesty

-- The official Nicaraguan press reported that seven Indian rebel commanders and about 200 troops signed a cease-fire agreement, disarmed, and accepted amnesty on 30 April. On 4 May, Managua asked the OAS to verify the surrender,

National Reconciliation

-- the meeting of selected members of Central American National Reconciliation Commission in San Jose last week focused on academic approaches to negotiation and conflict-resolution, but Guatemalan non-governmental representatives conferred with a rebel leader on the margins of the meeting. No Salvadorans attended. The only Nicaraguan, opposition member Mauricio Diaz, told the press that the Sandinista government was simply using the peace process as a tactical weapon to improve its position against both the insurgents and the internal opposition.

-- Salvadoran Foreign Minister Acevedo told [redacted] last week that the Salvadoran National Reconciliation Commission disbanded itself after having completed its work under the regional peace agreement. The Commission presumably would have to be reconstituted if the next Central American Executive Commission meeting ratifies its prior decision that National Commissions verify compliance with political provisions of the peace accord. Acevedo said that would be a troublesome political issue in El Salvador, since both opposition members of the Commission had resigned to protest government policies.

[redacted]

-- [redacted]

announced on 4 May that a formal meeting with the rebels would probably take place later this month. [redacted] Guatemala [redacted] says it has no objection to such a meeting and that Costa Rican President Arias's offer to mediate had been refused.

[redacted]

[redacted]

International Verification

-- [redacted]

[redacted]

-- OAS representatives told US Embassy officials in Nicaragua that they view the role of the Sapoa verification commission as an intermediary between the government and the rebels. They believe the commission will investigate any alleged cease-fire violations but will not judge whether violations actually occurred.

[redacted]

External Aid to Insurgents

[redacted]

-- The Salvadoran Navy interrupted a rebel seaborne supply operation off the Usulutan coast on 25 April, according to the Salvadoran press. The fleeing guerrillas abandoned rifles, ammunition, and materials for explosives, which the Salvadoran Navy believes originated in Nicaragua.

[redacted]

Refugees

-- Honduran troops participated in beating Nicaraguan Miskito Indian men and raping women at the border village of Rus Rus. [redacted] As a result some 800 Indians fled into Nicaragua and asked for UN protection. [redacted] there have been no abuses of this type in the last several years and there is no indication that the Honduran government sanctioned the attack. [redacted]

-- Costa Rican Civil Guardsmen began a sweep operation in the border area on 9 May after 15 well-armed bandits--believed to be former anti-Sandinista rebels--surrounded a police team sent to arrest them. In our view, this and other recent incidents may lead to greater public pressure on the government to support international arrangements to disarm the rebels who could enter the country as refugees.

Other Developments

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-- Costa Rican President Arias told the press on 6 May that El Salvador faces more difficulties than any other Central American country in gaining a lasting peace. Arias discounted the possibility of talks for the rest of President Duarte's term while noting progress in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

-- Salvadoran President Duarte severely criticized Nicaraguan compliance with the peace accord in a 4 May meeting with visiting South Dakota officials Duarte says Nicaragua has reneged on amnesty, failed to grant full press or personal freedoms, and has continued aiding the Salvadoran rebels. Salvadoran officials have not publicized this view in recent weeks.

-- Central American economic ministers met in San Jose last week to discuss priority areas for aid to the region in preparation for the UN General Assembly session on 12 May. the ministers

believed the long shopping list in the UN draft plan was too unwieldy, and proposed concentrating on five areas: food aid, an emergency fund for trade, energy security, external debt, and assistance for refugees.

-- Anti-Sandinista rebel troops continue to move from Nicaragua into Honduras seeking food and supplies, An estimated 7,000 combatants were in Honduras as of 7 May, with another 700 ready to enter the country this week. The Honduran military is expressing increasing concern with the security situation around the Las Vegas salient, reflecting worries of Honduran citizens in the area.

-- The World Court announced on 10 May that oral arguments in Nicaragua's suit against Honduras will be heard on 6 June. The oral proceedings, like the written pleadings filed by Honduras in February 1987 and Nicaragua in June 1987, are confined to issues of jurisdiction and admissibility.

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TABLE

Positions on Humanitarian Aid to the Anti-Sandinista Rebels

The Nicaraguan government and the anti-Sandinista rebels are locked in a dispute over the interpretation of the the provision in the cease-fire agreement of 23 March allowing deliveries of humanitarian aid to the rebels by neutral organizations chosen by mutual agreement. The Sandinistas say US deliveries--and Honduran cooperation--violate the Sapoa accord. The Central American Foreign Ministers avoided pronouncing on the question at the April meeting of the Executive Commission.

Nicaraguan Positions

Nicaraguan Government: Defense Minister Ortega said on day cease-fire was signed that he had no problem with deliveries by private companies, so long as they were not CIA fronts . . . Government backed away from this view at 8 April talks, saying emphasis should be on international organizations . . . formal proposal for using International Red Cross on 28 April

Anti-Sandinista Rebels: wants private companies used to ensure deliveries . . . distrusts Red Cross since local affiliate is Sandinista controlled . . . agrees to international verification of supplies and means of delivery.

Sapoa Verification Commission: OAS Secretary General Baena Soares recently criticized US deliveries as premature in letter to US . . . other member of Commission, Cardinal Obando, told press on 28 April that Baena wrote letter in personal capacity . . . Obando says he needs more facts

Views of the Democracies

Honduras: announced on 19 April it would allow US deliveries . . . says Sapoa accord provides basis for action . . . fully cooperating with movement of supplies to border

Costa Rica: President Arias told press on 7 April he would permit deliveries since Nicaragua and rebels had agreed . . . has backed off in wake of dispute, however, . . . will allow aid to children to begin immediately

Guatemala: President Cerezo agreed in principle to allowing use of Guatemalan territory . . . indicated he would make public statement but has not done so

El Salvador: President Duarte would permit use of Salvadoran territory but needed specific endorsement of the Central American Executive Commission . .